

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE II, GRANT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
MARCH 3, 2016

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. When are grant proposals due?
A. Grant proposals must be submitted through the State Water Resources Control Board's Financial Application Assistance Submittal Tool (FAAST) by 11:59 pm PDT on Sunday, March 20, 2016. Late submissions will not be accepted.
2. Q. Can project activities occur outside of the grant period of October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019, and if so, can the costs of those activities be charged to the grant?
A. No, activities that occur outside of the grant duration and their related expenses cannot be charged to the grant. Applicants may use cost sharing to fund activities prior to the start of the grant duration; however, activities occurring before grant awards are announced would be subject to the risk that grant funding is not subsequently received.
3. Q. Will CDFA provide answers to specific questions regarding the eligibility of grant proposals or assist applicants in selecting a program priority and/or an outcome measure and indicator?
A. To maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with feedback on specific proposals during the solicitation process. CDFA cannot provide guidance on the most appropriate program priority and/or outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) for a grant proposal.
4. Q. Can substantial changes be made to the project described in the concept proposal?
A. Applicants may revise and refine their project during the grant proposal phase, as some degree of change is anticipated in response to grant proposal requirements and feedback provided. However, substantial changes are discouraged and CDFA cannot anticipate how changes to the scope of a project will be viewed by the Technical Review Committee.
5. Q. Can project titles change from the concept proposal to the grant proposal?
A. Yes, project titles can be updated from the concept proposal to the grant proposal. Access the General Information tab in FAAST to update the project title.
6. Q. How does one access the Technical Review Committee and CDFA Administrative Review Feedback for their concept proposal in FAAST and can CDFA provide clarification on the feedback?
A. To view the concept proposal feedback, log onto FAAST at <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/> using your username and password and click on Submitted Applications. Select the project's title and click on the Feedback tab. To maintain the integrity and competitiveness of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), CDFA is unable to provide applicants with clarification on feedback provided in FAAST.

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7. Q. Where are the Cost Principles for Federal Grants (2 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 200 and Federal Acquisition Regulation [FAR] Subpart 31.2) located?
- A. [Links to 2 CFR 200 and FAR 31.2 can be found on page 3 of the 2016 SCBGP Grant Proposal Instructions. 2 CFR 200 applies to state, local or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and colleges and universities. FAR 31.2 applies to profitmaking organizations.](#)
8. Q. When are 2016 SCBGP awards announced and can CDFA inform applicants of the status of their application prior to the announcement?
- A. [It is anticipated that the United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) will announce 2016 SCBGP awards in October 2016. USDA has final approval of all proposals awarded funding; therefore, CDFA cannot advise applicants of their project status before awards are announced.](#)
9. Q. Can applicants be awarded funding for more than one SCBGP project?
- A. [Yes, however duplication of cost or activities is not permitted. Also, applicants should ensure they have adequate capacity to effectively manage multiple SCBGP awards.](#)
10. Q. Can applicants use any prior year grant proposal templates?
- A. [No, applicants must use only the 2016 grant proposal templates provided in the 2016 Grant Proposal Instructions and in FFAST.](#)
11. Q. There is no place to enter a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number in FFAST? Is this still a requirement, along with registration on the System for Award Management (SAM)?
- A. [A DUNS number and registration on the SAM is not required prior to submitting a grant proposal; thus, it has been removed from the grant proposal application. However, successful 2016 applicants will be required to provide the applicant organization's DUNS number before SCBGP funds are awarded. Applicants are highly encouraged to begin the free registration process now.](#)
12. Q. How does an applicant organization obtain a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number?
- A. [To obtain a DUNS number, applicants should visit the D&B website and select "Click here to request your D-U-N-S Number via the Web." Successful 2016 applicants will be required to provide the applicant organization's DUNS number before SCBGP funds are awarded. Applicants are highly encouraged to begin the free registration process now.](#)
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Where can applicants access information regarding the eligibility of a particular crop or commodity?
A. Applicants can access a list of eligible specialty crops on the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>
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FIXED AMOUNT AWARDS

1. Q. Do fixed amount award applicants complete the same questionnaire in FFAST as other applicants to the program?
A. Yes, a complete application is necessary for CDFA to conduct an administrative review of the proposal and for the Technical Review Committee to complete a merit based review.
2. Q. Is it necessary for fixed amount award applicants to complete the grant proposal Budget Narrative?
A. Yes, fixed amount awards are based on outcomes achieved rather than actual costs incurred; however, costs associated with these awards must comply with the federal cost principles, USDA program requirements and CDFA program requirements. A complete Budget Narrative, along with completion of the Fixed Amount Awards Objectives Schedule Table at the bottom of the Budget Narrative, are necessary to determine the allowability and reasonableness of costs fixed amount award projects will incur to complete the project objectives.
3. Q. If a fixed amount award is funded, how will the recipient receive funds for work completed?
A. The Budget Narrative includes a section for fixed amount award applicants to describe the outcomes of their proposal, and set a payment schedule based on expected costs to achieve these outcomes. The proposed payment schedule should align with the objectives described in the response to question three of the grant proposal application, Project Objectives, and include a deliverable that will evidence completion of each objective. As part of its agreement with SCBGP recipients, CDFA withholds 10 percent of funds until the final invoice and final performance report are received and/or any performance issues or audit findings are resolved. When developing the payment schedule, applicants should ensure that the final payment equals at least 10 percent of the total funds requested to ensure compliance with the Withhold Pending Closeout provision.
4. Q. What is the benefit to applicants of applying for a fixed amount award?
A. The application requirements are the same for fixed amount awards and conventional grant proposals. However, if awarded funds, fixed amount award recipients have reduced administrative requirements and greater flexibility to achieve project outcomes.

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5. Q. Do fixed amount awards have the same start date as the conventional grant proposals?
A. Yes, the earliest start date for all 2016 SCBGP projects, including fixed amount awards, is October 1, 2016. Projects are allowed to start later than October 1, 2016 but must be completed by March 31, 2019. Please note that fixed amount awards can only be two years in duration.
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FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. How does one access the grant proposal application in FAAST?
A. To view the grant proposal application, log onto FAAST at <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/> using your username and password and click on Active Applications. Select the project's title and click on the Questionnaire tab.
2. Q. What are the computer system requirements necessary to use FAAST?
A. The FAAST System Administrator recommends using a PC with Internet Explorer (6.0 or higher) and disabling pop-up blocking software while using FAAST. CDFA strongly encourages applicants to submit their grant proposals in advance of the deadline to ensure there is adequate time to resolve any technical issues that may arise. CDFA is not responsible for any submission issues that may arise from applicants using non-recommended operating systems or browsers and will not grant deadline extensions.
3. Q. When I open the Project Objectives, Outcome Measures, Budget Narrative, and Cost Sharing Summary templates, they are locked and I am unable to edit them. What should I do?
A. To properly complete the FAAST application templates, click on the file links and select "Save as." Save the files to your computer first, then open the file. You may then make edits and complete the document. The Outcomes Measures template may open in read-only view. In this case, click on "VIEW" then "Edit Document." Make sure you save your document after edits are made before uploading the completed attachment within the Attachment tab in FAAST.
4. Q. What attachments are required to be submitted with the grant proposal application?
A. All projects are required to complete and attach three templates to the application in FAAST: Project Objectives, Outcome Measures, and Budget Narrative. For projects with matching funds or in-kind contributions, a fourth template is required: Cost Sharing. Failure to submit one or more of the required templates will result in disqualification.
5. Q. Can additional documents beyond the attachments required be submitted with an application?
A. There is no prohibition against attaching additional documents to the FAAST application. However, additional attachments should not be included if the intention is to circumvent FAAST character limits. The Technical Review Committee is not required to review any additional attachments beyond what is required. Applicants should not rely on additional attachments for project clarity or to supplement answers within the questionnaire.

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6. Q. Are there character limits for each section of the grant proposal application in FFAST as well as page limits on the attachments?
- A. FFAST imposes text box character limits, clearly marked in red text at the bottom of each text box. The character limits range from 100 to 1,000 characters. Please view the grant proposal questionnaire within FFAST for more detail. The Project Objectives template should not exceed two pages. There are no page limits set on the Outcome Measures, Budget Narrative, and Cost Sharing templates.
7. Q. Has the Work Plan been removed from the grant proposal application?
- A. The Work Plan has been removed from the grant proposal application. However, multiple sections of the 2016 grant proposal application allow applicants to describe the activities of their project in thorough detail, including, but not limited to, sections within the Project Objectives, Budget Narrative, Outcome Measures, and Cost Sharing templates, as applicable.
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FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can grant proposals be submitted under a different funding category than the concept proposal?
- A. No, grant proposals cannot be submitted under a different funding category than the concept proposal.
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PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions posted at this time.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

1. Q. Applicants are asked to identify at least one of the 2016 SCBGP program priorities for their chosen funding category. What is meant by "identify"?
- A. Applicants must make clear the specific program priority (or priorities) their project will address. For this section of the application, applicants should cite at least one program priority as described in the 2016 SCBGP Request for Concept Proposals and explain how the project addresses this priority. Applicants should select the priority (or priorities) that are listed beneath the chosen funding category for their project.
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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Q. What's the difference between Project Objectives and Outcome Measures?
A. Project Objectives refer to specific goals the project hopes to achieve. The objectives of the project should be relevant to the chosen funding category and the identified program priority or priorities. Outcome Measures refer to specific performance data applicants will collect to assess the success of a project. A list of Outcome Measures and their relevant indicators has been provided within the Outcome Measures template. Applicants must select at least one of the eight outcomes listed, and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s).
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PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. What is meant by "project beneficiaries"?
A. Project beneficiaries are the people, groups, commodities, etc. that benefit from the project. What is appropriate for your project depends on the project's outcomes. CDFA is unable to advise applicants regarding the relevance of their project's beneficiaries but encourages applicants to consider their chosen outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) when estimating their project's beneficiaries.
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SPECIALTY CROP ENHANCEMENT

1. Q. Are projects with the potential to benefit non-specialty crops eligible to receive funding?
A. SCBGP funds can only be used to benefit eligible specialty crops. If a project has the potential to benefit ineligible commodities, the response to the Specialty Crop Enhancement question must demonstrate the tracking mechanisms and processes that are in place or will be implemented to verify all SCBGP funds are expended on activities and costs that solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible California specialty crops.
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PRIOR YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

No questions posted at this time.

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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

1. Q. The Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities table states that fundraising is unallowable under the SCBGP. If raising funds is integral to an organization's sustainability, may fundraising to sustain the project beyond the grant duration be discussed within Project Sustainability?
A. Organized fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used, is unallowable under the SCBGP. The SCBGP cannot pay for costs associated with fundraising during the grant duration, which includes salaries of personnel involved in activities to raise capital. However, fundraising conducted after the grant duration without the use of SCBGP funds would be allowable to sustain the project and its results.
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FUNDING SOURCES

No questions posted at this time.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

1. Q. Are Letters of Support required?
A. Letters of Support are not a requirement of the SCBGP, but are strongly encouraged in demonstrating industry support for your project. Letters of Support may come from specialty crop stakeholders, individuals, and organizations outside the applicant organization not involved in but in support of the project. Letters of Support that come from the applicant, employees of the applicant, cooperators, contractors, or any other entity that will receive project funding should not be included. Letters of Support should be on official letterhead, be addressed to CDFA Office of Grants Administration, and explain why the organization is in support of the project.
 2. Q. Who should be listed as cooperating entities?
A. Cooperating entities are organizations an applicant will be working with to plan and/or implement the proposed project. Cooperating entities can include individuals who may receive a portion of the SCBGP funds and/or provide matching funds or in-kind contributions.
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OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. Do applicants choose outcome measures and indicators based on funding category?
A. All proposals submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category must select the outcome measure to increase sales. Proposals in other funding categories that involve marketing or promotion of specialty crops as defined in the Outcome Measures Supplement must also select the outcome to increase sales. However, proposals in other funding categories that do not involve marketing or promotion may choose any of the outcome measures and their indicators as applicable to their project. CDFA is unable to advise applicants regarding which outcome measures and indicators to choose.
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BUDGET NARRATIVE

1. Q. Can modifications be made from the concept proposal to either increase or decrease the budget amount requested in the grant proposal?
A. Yes, modifications can be made from the concept proposal to either increase or decrease the budget amount requested in the grant proposal. If the budget amount requested changes, the budget amount should be updated in FFAST. While there are no requirements regarding the maximum amount that the budget may change, drastic changes (+/- 20%) may be questioned. Most importantly, the new budget amount must range between \$50,000 and \$450,000. In the case of fixed amount awards, grant amounts must range from \$50,000 and \$150,000.
2. Q. Does the Budget Template submitted with the concept proposal need to be updated to reflect changes made to the budget during the grant proposal phase?
A. Applicants are only required to complete the grant proposal Budget Narrative. It is not necessary to update the concept proposal Budget Template or to complete a new concept proposal Budget Template.
3. Q. Projects with contractual costs must complete additional Budget Narrative attachments detailing the costs for each contractor listed. Is there a separate attachment available for download to complete and attach for each contractor?
A. If contractual costs are requested, download, complete, and attach additional Budget Narrative templates for each contractor. Applicants with contractual costs would complete a Budget Narrative template and additional Budget Narrative templates per contractor. Each contractor Budget Narrative template must be completed and attached as an MS Word document in paragraph form using 11 point font with 1 inch margins. Name each file: Budget_Contractor1, Budget_Contractor2, Budget_Contractor3, etc.

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4. Q. For applicants with contractual costs, how much detail should be provided in the separate contractual Budget Narrative template(s)?
- A. Applicants attaching additional Budget Narrative templates per contractor should follow the directions provided within the Budget Narrative template, providing the same level of detail and answering each section as appropriate for the contractual costs requested. For example: Costs for travel undertaken by a contractor should be detailed in the Travel section of a separate contractual Budget Narrative template per the guidelines provided.
5. Q. What is the limit for compensation for individual contractors/consultants?
- A. Compensation for individual contractual fees should be reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. Hourly rates/flat fees for contractors/consultants cannot exceed the GS-15 step 10 for your locality/area without justification. A justification for an individual contractor/consultant may include but is not limited to: a cost/price analysis; an explanation of unique qualifications, special expertise due to the complexity of the project/task or limited pool of available or qualified contractors/consultants; or historical data supporting the rate charged by contractors/consultants.
6. Q. Are fiscal sponsorships allowable under the SCBGP?
- A. Projects that involve a fiscal sponsorship are subject to the following requirements: 1) The fiscal sponsorship arrangement and the identities of the involved parties must be clearly disclosed within the grant application; 2) If awarded funds, the fiscal sponsor, rather than the sponsored organization, is the grant recipient. The fiscal sponsor is responsible for executing the grant agreement and must ensure all project activities and costs, including activities of the sponsored organization, contractors or consultants comply with applicable Federal regulations and requirements, and grant terms and conditions; 3) Changes to the recipient (such as a change from the non-profit fiscal sponsor to the sponsored organization) or key personnel require USDA and CDFA approval; and 4) Fiscal sponsorship fees cannot be charged as a direct cost. Fiscal sponsorship fees may be allowable as an indirect cost, if charged consistent with the sponsored organization's established policies.
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COST SHARING

1. Q. What is the difference between matching funds and/or in-kind contributions?
- A. Matching funds refer to real dollar contributions to a project from sources other than the SCBGP. In-kind contributions refer to the determined values of assets donated to the project (i.e., equipment, use of land, volunteered staff time, etc.). If matching funds and/or in-kind contributions, also sometimes referred to as cost sharing, have been secured, applicants must complete and attach the Cost Sharing template.

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2. Q. Should applicants attach letters documenting cost share from individuals or organizations contributing matching funds or in-kind contributions?
- A. For 2016, applicants only need to attach the Cost Sharing template to document any matching funds and/or in-kind contributions. Letters from individuals or organizations supplying cost share should not be included. The Cost Sharing template will provide sufficient evidence of financial commitment. On the other hand, Letters of Support should come from individuals or organizations that approve of and endorse the project rather than provide financial support. If applicable, Letters of Support should be attached as detailed in question nine, External Project Support.
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PROJECT OVERSIGHT

1. Q. Is there a limit to the amount of Project Directors, Project Managers, or Principal Investigators a project may have?
- A. There is no limit on the number of Project Directors, Project Managers, or Principal Investigators a project may have. It is up to the applicant to determine the appropriate amount.
2. Q. May information about Project Directors, Project Managers, or Principal Investigators be changed during the grant proposal phase?
- A. Yes, this information may and should change if necessary to reflect the most updated information.
3. Q. The Project Management tab in FFAST does not allow for more than one Project Director, Project Manager, or Principal Investigator to be listed. If the project will have more than one, where should this information be included?
- A. Resumes or curriculum vitae should be attached for any Project Director, Project Manager, or Principal Investigator who will receive a portion of the project funds as detailed in Question 13 of the Application Questionnaire, Project Oversight. It is up to the applicant to determine other areas of the proposal where appropriate. For instance, if the additional Project Director, Project Manager, or Principal Investigator will receive a portion of project funds, they should be included in the Budget Narrative template. If the additional Project Director, Project Manager, or Principal Investigator will be donating their time to the project, they should be included in the Cost Sharing template.
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GRANT MANAGEMENT AND AUDITS

No questions posted at this time.
